

Reconceptualising Sleep: Relational Principles Inside/Outside of the Pram

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Abstract

This article explores sleep among kindergarten infants and toddlers. Although the collective order of sleep in kindergarten makes it a relational issue, the search here is for relations that extend beyond human actors and beyond the idea of the pram as a sleep-container used by a sleeping subject. Here, sleep is seen as entangled with bodies and prams; it has a rhythm and a tempo, as well as the power to challenge the capitalist call for productivity. The article addresses sleep in terms of spatial configurations and contextualises it within a web of political relations rather than as a leftover of life. Informed by Foucault's notions of heterotopia, the paper characterises sleep as a world within a world, drawing attention to relational principles and material-discursive spaces that are characterised as 'different', on the understanding that sleep is not an intermission from life or relationships. Moving beyond the conceptualisation of sleep as a health and medical issue, it is reframed as embodied and embedded, enabling exploration of sleep in kindergarten as relational.

Introduction

This article explores the idea of infants' and toddlers' sleep as relational—that is, falling asleep does not cut them off from relationships. This requires an active effort not to privilege the awake child's relationships over those of the sleeper, asking instead what would happen if we refused to exclude sleeping children from relations in infant-toddler pedagogy. In addition, the reader is invited to rethink prevailing ideas that frame sleep as passive, isolated and individual. In kindergarten, the collective sleep of infants and toddlers makes sleeping a relational issue, but the connections extend beyond the human actors. In searching for relations beyond side-by-side sleeping bodies, I consider the contours of material-discursive arrangements for sleep, addressing relational principles inside/outside of the pram.

Following Michael Foucault, sleep in early childhood settings is problematised here by exploring the ways in which 'power regards life' (Foucault, 1991)—more specifically, how power regards sleeping life in early years settings. Introducing a material-discursive awareness facilitates a more nuanced account of sleep coming into existence inside/outside of the pram. From this perspective, object and subject are entangled in space and time, resisting the image of separated sleepers. Foucault's concept of 'heterotopia' (Foucault, 1994) provides the analytic fulcrum, directing attention to space as it relates to deviation. Exploring sleep as 'a different space', the discussion goes on to question constructions of sleep in kindergarten as an 'outside zone'. By addressing sleep in this way, my ethical aim is to highlight its role as more than just an intermission in the relationship-rich world of very young children.

Following pathways created by early childhood researchers, the article draws on epistemological, ontological, ethical and political foundations beyond the Cartesian heritage (Tesar, 2016), adding further tension to the politics of sleep by treating it as a complex transformational field (Williams, 2011). This challenge to prevailing discursive approaches to sleep in kindergarten finds support in Foucault's narratives. As stated, the article builds on the premise that life is politicised during both sleeping and waking hours (Foucault, 1991; Williams, 2011). Drawing on critical, feminist and poststructural policy studies that question how 'policy operates through surveillance, regulation and modification of certain bodies' (Pillow, 2015: 60), the aim is to look beyond the stable human subject in examining sleep. Expanding the blurring of the human subject creates a crossover to posthuman studies, linking the posthuman stress on elements of space and temporality to a vision of the self (Braidotti, 2013). This

resonates with my interest in sleep in kindergarten as relational, and I seek to expand the theoretical basis for understanding infant-toddler pedagogy by proposing new ways of conceptualising the process of sleeping.

The present article centres ultimately on that conceptual discussion, introducing examples from Norwegian kindergartens to a critical discussion that is of relevance beyond Norway to the wider contemporary global context in demonstrating how sleep in early childhood settings might be reconceptualised. The examples are framed as statements, which I methodically position as discursive events (Peräkylä and Ruusuvuori, 2011: 531). The examples range from kindergarten documentation (a pamphlet) to government documentation (juridical constraints) and autobiographical passages. To develop a critical discussion, the examples are discussed in relation to the concepts in question. The methodological approach draws also on my memories (as a former preschool teacher) of naptime. Autobiographical projects tend to blur boundaries between the personal and the professional, surpassing ideas of a ‘past retold’ (Silin, 2013 :20). In the present case, the autobiographical passages are grounded in a willingness ‘to twist the discussions, additions and extensions’ (Reinertsen, 2016 :121). As Rhedding-Jones (2001 :135) put it, ‘I carry it [memories] with me always’, and so, the memories are embedded in the text that follows. The next section delves further into sleep, each topic immediately touching on images of the subject. With due awareness of this concern, I begin to rethink relational principles through the lens of heterotopia.

Sleep in kindergarten

In the course of a day, both adults and children must lie down and allow their breathing to become deeper and their eyelids to close in sleep. Very young children’s sleep rhythm differs from older children and adults, who sleep mostly at night. More than 80% of one- to two-year-olds in Norway spend their daytime hours at kindergarten (Statistics of Norway, 2016), where the very youngest will sleep once or twice during the day. This differs from the sleep of older children and adults not only in rhythm and place but also in form, as sleep in kindergarten is collective. In contrast, as an adult, I spend my sleeping hours in the privacy of my home, behind closed doors and in my ‘own’ bed. My sleep patterns follow the ‘privatisation’

of sleep prevalent in European society—a phenomenon discussed by Williams and Crossley (2008: 7) with reference to Elias's (1978/1939) work on the history of manners.

In Norwegian early childhood settings, as in other Scandinavian countries, young children often sleep outside in the playground in their 'private' prams, which are typically lined up against a wall. Some kindergartens also allow children to sleep in dormitories, on mattresses on the floor or in cots. Known as naptime or rest-time, this routine is also referred to as a 'time-out' or a 'break'.

When we sleep, a thin layer of skin extends over our eyes and blocks out visual impressions. Although veiled by the skin, the eye's activity during sleep offers medical science a means of objectifying and analysing sleep. The body does not switch off during sleep, but this urge to focus specifically on the eye, and on the gaze, seems symptomatic of modern science (Ulla, 2014a), as the age of empiricism foregrounds the watchful eye (Spindler, 2013). It is perhaps precisely this power attributed to the eye that renders humans less effective or useful when their eyes are closed; the examining eye is put to rest when the body falls asleep. While sleeping, the eyes are sealed off, and the tongue muscle rests in the mouth. Perhaps sleep is envisaged in an outside zone precisely because we can neither see ourselves nor verbally express ourselves while sleeping. However, embodiment perspectives (Braidotti, 2011) allow us to resist to framing sleep as *having* a body that needs rest; instead, just as we 'are becoming' bodies, we 'are becoming' states of wakefulness or sleep. From this perspective, sleep need not be confined to processes occurring behind the sleeping child's eyelids, and falling asleep need not isolate the child from the awake world. Rather, becoming asleep and becoming awake are temporary shifts in a common world. Applying these notions to the field of infant-toddler pedagogy, I began by searching for a means of (re)conceptualising the sleeping subject. By decentring the subject, it becomes possible to consider kindergarten sleep relations as material-discursive, and therefore as spatial configurations.

Decentring the sleeping subject

Decentring the subject invites alternative perspectives on sleep. The break with visions of the self recalls post-Freudian developments in continental philosophy, emphasising the sensing and complex body. To foreground these embodiment perspectives, it becomes necessary to break with the Cartesian distinction between mind and body (Fraser and Greco, 2005). Within the field of early childhood research, a number

of Scandinavian scholars have developed posthuman approaches to reconceptualise studies of infant-toddler pedagogics (Olsson, 2012; Rossholt, 2012; Sandvik, 2013). These contributions facilitate transgression in searching for alternative ways of (re)conceptualising sleep in kindergarten. Drawing on the work of Deleuze and Guattari, these researchers have not only transgressed ideas of the subject but also of relations beyond human subjects. In this regard, Olsson (2012) elaborated an understanding of children operating in relational fields; as she put it, 'Children do not seem to divide the world and themselves up in quite so many categories as adults do' (Olsson, 2012: 103). This led me to question whether it is possible to resist the urge to divide sleepers and non-sleepers, instead, perhaps, viewing sleep as a mix of speed and slowness in an ongoing becoming of tempo and energy, where bodies are becoming in an ongoing transition between sleep and wakefulness. Following Rossholt (2012), I recognise sleep as relational in terms of tempo, energy and affect. These shifting relations are not confined to processes behind the sleeper's eyelids; rather, it is possible to envisage a more sophisticated sleep in a complex conceptualisation of naptime beyond mere duration and regulation. As a former preschool teacher, I have memories in my fingers of movements from naptime: tender fingertips on the brow, bodies becoming supple and eyelids becoming heavy, as well as the sounds of crying, sighs and swinging prams. In these relations, there are negotiations, both between humans and beyond them. Highlighting action forces, Sandvik (2013) demonstrated how relations are always in part negotiations, as they never originate as controllable or domesticated interactions. By moving beyond human actors, she opens an overwhelming complexity within these relations, which she describes by quoting Deleuze and Guattari: 'You are longitude and latitude, a set of speeds and slowness between unformed particles, a set of non-subjectified affect. You have the individuality of a day, a season, a year, a life (regardless of its duration)—a climate, a wind, a fog, a swarm, a pack (regardless of its regularity)' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: 289, in Sandvik, 2013: 133). This opens the door to a view of sleep as swarm, regardless of its duration and regularity. Adopting these perspectives, I sought to explore how children always operate in relational fields, where infant-toddlers never exist self-contained, and where sleep is not simply exterior to relations. By accepting the premise that relations always operate beyond the human and the more than human, one can better understand how the child operates within a mosaic of relations.

In the present context, this approach assumes that the pram is not a passive container or simply an object used by a sleeping subject. Instead, both pram and child are regarded as part of the relational field. Sleep is entangled in a relational apparatus with elements like the pram's swinging spring, passing puffs of wind, the sound of nails scratching the pram's folding top, the temperature in the baby bunting and so on. In short, sleep does not start and end with the subject. Here, I follow Manning (2009: 34) and accept her invitation to move beyond the skin when investigating infants' interactions; as she stated, 'Relations fold experience into such that what emerges is always more than the sum of its parts'. Adopting this perspective, I discover sleep as more than eyelids, breaths and pulses. Sleep extends beyond time and space and breaks open these entanglements. It makes a mosaic, with baby calls as both repeating lullabies and instruments, and it transforms across speeds and slowing. Sleep can provoke; it may even strike in the middle of a joke. It discharges and charges, cutting across the divide between active and passive but not as a body switched off. While the only sound emanating from the sleeping child is their breathing, the observant eye will notice the pram move ever so slightly in synchrony with the rhythm of sleep. In the kindergarten's everyday life, sleep seems juxtaposed with wakefulness. All elements are related and given form in spatial configurations. The next section links sleep to what Foucault (1994) described as 'a world within a world' before moving on to discuss how these elements also become embedded in political landscapes.

Rethinking relational principles through the lens of heterotopia

In his *Different Spaces* lecture (1994), Foucault problematised space/place by reference to the concept of *heterotopia*. This incorporates the Greek word for *space* and encompasses what we describe as physical space with social and cultural space. In this way, heterotopia is linked to both space and place, spanning what we describe as both a locality and a location. In line with this concept, sleep in kindergarten can be characterised as a world within a world, as it is situated in a pedagogical space, yet also simultaneously not. For example, when a row of prams is placed along a wall at the kindergarten, each constitutes a space within a space. Again, I view the mattresses on the kindergarten's floor as corresponding events, but the space also incorporates something more extended: connections in a web of widespread relations. Space designated for sleep also constitutes a space filled with possibility, an abstract space to be utilised. The kindergarten's sleeping locations constitute an opposing force—an exterior to the pedagogical space.

Adopting Foucault's concept of the site, I analysed sleep as a relational web of divergent spaces. By exploring sleep within this framework, I seek to reveal contradictions. As Sudradjat put it, 'The heterotopia presents a juxtapositional, relational space, a site that represent incompatible spaces and reveal paradoxes' (Sudradjat, 2012: 29). The aim, then, is to gain insight into how we might (re-)discover sleeping children's relational space as one that exists in parallel with the space of children who are awake.

From my own recollections of kindergarten naptime routines, I recognise the sound of nails scratching the blanket as a signal that naptime is over. When visiting a kindergarten, I also recognise the prams swaying softly back and forth, suggesting a collective wakeup time. The row of prams is spatially isolated but equally not, as I assimilate other porous dimensions. Space is closely bound to our experience of time; both adults and children share the time of the kindergarten's opening hours, but when the teacher glances at their watch to note exactly when a child falls asleep, another complex apparatus emerges. Foucault's heterotopia provides a context for considering sleep as a marginal time and space within the kindergarten. While recognising that the pram, the bed and the mattress represent different space events for the youngest children, the space itself is not an isolated container for sleep. Foucault's heterotopia offers a tool for questioning relations of emplacement (Foucault, 1994: 177)—a gateway through which to search for spatial configurations, as Foucault described how heterotopia's function is specific to a given cultural context.

Sleep insists on transforming our tempos and rhythms. In the kindergarten, it is part of the pedagogical place, simultaneously within this place and not. I contend that sleep can be understood as a world within a world coming into existence. Being asleep differs somehow from being awake, and sleeping children are other than those who are awake—for instance, their pulses and their breathing differ. By foregrounding the interconnections between the sleeping and the awakened child, some of the dominant biases surrounding the youngest children in kindergarten are challenged.

And perhaps our life is still dominated by a certain number of oppositions that cannot be tampered with, that institutions and practices have not ventured to change—oppositions we take for granted, for example, between private and public space, between family space and social space, between

cultural space and useful space, between the space of leisure activities and the space of work. All these are still controlled by an unspoken sacralization. (Foucault, 1994: 177)

Sleep is simultaneously within and without. The sleeping zone is a semi-closed space, inviting entry and exit. Reading this through the lens of Foucault's heterotopia, I search for a spatial possibility beyond this divide. In particular, the place where the child sleeps can be viewed as a marginal space where, as discussed in the next section, constructions of age and need dictate opportunity to enter and exit. The kindergarten prams and mattresses constitute cubicles, a delimited part of the kindergarten's extensive space. Kindergarten naptime follows an order that surfaces in the routine: who must sleep, when, how and where, linked in a higher rationale of discursive arrangements (Foucault, 1999). As staff perform the procedures, one can follow both the children who go to sleep and the non-sleepers. According to Foucault's concept of heterotopia, the different spaces can occur or arrive with an absolute break from the normal. In medicine, the term *heterotopia* refers to 'the displacement of an organ or part of the body from its normal positions. The heterotopia is etymologically linked to another more familiar term, utopia, which Foucault cites as a theoretical counterpoint to the heterotopia' (Sudradjat, 2012: 29). This creates a space for analysing positions of normality and, further on, the ways in which power regards life. The organisation of sleep follows both a rationalisation and a spatialisation. On that basis, the next section explores specified procedures around naptime at a kindergarten before moving on to question the biopoliticisation of sleep.

Expectations of an Exit

The following includes information from a kindergarten's webpage. The statements are excerpts from a pamphlet to inform parents of the kindergarten's routines, describing sleep policy and practice as well as sleep patterns. After characterising the sleep situation, the text describes how staff end naptime:

When the child is approaching the age of three to three-and-a-half, she/he will need less sleep during the daytime. You will find attached an overview of the average child's need for sleep relative to age. [Translated by the author from Norwegian to English]

Here, the age at which the child is expected to stop taking naps is explicitly stated and specifically linked to the age range three to three-and-a-half years; the expression of needs is repeated twice. After describing

routines bringing naptime to an end, there is a final sentence concerning life after napping. In my reading of the text, this sentence resonates:

At kindergarten, the child who no longer takes naps will have more time to play, learn and be sociable together with the other children in the group. [Translated by the author from Norwegian to English]

If reduced sleeping time is seen to function as a transition to more play, learning and social activity, this sentence reflects a broader narrative about politicised life in early childhood. Here, the ideal of childhood emerges from a particular determination of the playing, learning and social subject, which is contrasted with the napping child. An alternative wakeful life is exposed, but the question then arises whether sleep and napping are an absolute break from play, learning and social activities. Here, I touch on a conflict, as the sleeping child does not correspond to ‘contemporary images of a strong and capable child who actively contributes to his or her learning experience’ (Cheeseman and Sumsion, 2016: 277). If spending time sleeping stops the child from fulfilling the kindergarten’s image of an ideal child, the sleeping child becomes a deviation—in other words, a child that does not conform to the required norms of ‘playing, learning and being sociable’. Again, the politicised life of childhood is not confined to children who are awake; as the next section reveals, the child who creates a rhythm at the seesaw and the child who creates a rhythm in the pram are both of and in a wider (and politicised) world.

A biopoliticised sleep

Considered in light of Foucault’s (1999) discursive approach, knowledge of sleep is wrapped up in a higher rationale, in which rest and sleep are closely associated with health and wellbeing, and surveillance and regulation of sleep form part of a biopolitical dimension. As Williams (2011) argued, politicised sleep constitutes a complex and transformative problem area as a prism of ‘contemporary life and living’ (Williams, 2011: xii). The sleeping child at the kindergarten reflects a modern political arena, wherein economy and efficiency are highly valued. The child who does not rest in the evening, wakes up during the night or opens their eyes too early in the morning challenges a broader sleep-wakefulness agenda. Parents who must go to work are tired and may feel provoked by a child who wakes in the middle of the night. In the worst cases, parents may become ill from too little sleep over time. Williams (2011: 36) highlighted problems that arise when government and workplace depend on alert, well-rested and efficient workers. A

body that insists on staying awake or does not sleep when sleep is scheduled may be seen as provocative, triggering both conflict and crisis in a society that mandates performance and productivity.

Drawing on Foucault's biopolitical concept (1991), one can see how children's sleep in kindergarten is not isolated from capitalism's drive for productivity. Sleep is woven into the apparatus of health and medicine, and care for sleeping children is associated with the 'correct management of this age of life' (Foucault, 1980a: 172). As the kindergarten, informed by health knowledge, administers sleep, it advances the medico-administration process and contributes to the apparatus for improving 'the population's health as a whole' (Foucault, 1980a: 182). For example, the above pamphlet states that the child's sleeping pattern is aligned to fit the rhythm of the day care institution. The details of the chosen placement of sleeping children and the staff's subsequent routine are elements of microphysics, where even small adjustments are seen to form part of an overarching political anatomy (Foucault, 1977). As kindergarten staff prepare the children for sleep and determine the time and space in which that sleep takes place, the conditions of sleep are surrounded by discursive formations, including a spatial distribution that constitutes a comprehensive dispositive (Foucault, 1980b). This dispositive ensemble of disciplinary forces in kindergarten might be explored in terms of relations of power, knowledge and bodies (Ulla, 2014b) and as elements interwoven with the child finding rest.

As posited earlier, the states of sleep and wakefulness are typically seen as opposites. In the empirical example above, the end of sleep is seen as a portal to extended time 'to play, learn and be sociable together with the other children in the group'. In her study of health constructions connected to childhood, Backett-Milburn (1999) demonstrated how the active body is advanced as an ideal. Integral to this conception is the idea that 'an active body is a healthy body' (91), where sleep comes to be associated with inactivity. The Norwegian Directorate of Health is unequivocal in linking sleep to (poor) health; on its webpage,ⁱ it states that 'sleep disorders are among the most common health complaints in the Norwegian population and are seen as one of Norway's most widespread and underestimated public health issues'.
[Author's translation]

In this way, a national authority frames sleep disorders as a health issue, and in the kindergarten mandate, sleep is addressed under the headline 'Life Skills and Health'. Although not referring explicitly to sleep, the national curriculum calls for a calm and caring environment, in which kindergarten staff are

responsible for ensuring that every child has opportunities for rest and relaxation during the day [author's translation] (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017). By introducing the notion of rest, the curriculum reflects the view of sleep advanced in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, which positions sleep as the right to rest:

Rest: The right to rest requires that children are afforded sufficient respite from work, education or exertion of any kind to ensure their optimum health and wellbeing. It also requires that they are provided with the opportunity for adequate sleep. In fulfilling the right to both respite from activity and adequate sleep, regard must be afforded to children's evolving capacities and their developmental needs. (United Nations, 2013: Article 31, Paragraph 1)

In that article, sleep is posited as a fundamental and universal right. In a Norwegian context, the incorporation of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* has affected Article 12, which highlights the right to freely express views. Somehow, the sleeping child merits less attention when an intense focus on the right to freely express views is incorporated into kindergartens. This seems connected to Lee's (2008: 57) assertion: 'Sleeping persons do not seem to be agents, express identity or give voice'. Although the sleeping child is located next to the wakeful child, it seems essential to dwell on how sleep and the sleeping child are differently designated. The sleeping child by no means escapes the watchful eye, as staff cast their gaze across the location where the children sleep, and instruments like the Baby-Call are installed to listen closely to the sounds of the sleeping children. Yet, regardless of how advanced the technology becomes, it cannot capture the landscape of dreams. What goes on behind closed eyelids is beyond anyone's control. In this regard, perhaps sleep touches on a broader crisis in today's society, where 'catching a child's mind' (Tesar, 2016: 401) has gained prominence in policy directions for early childhood education and care. If, as noted in the kindergarten pamphlet, ending sleep constructs an exit into play, learning and being sociable, then sleep becomes an error, as the sleeping child does not conform to the ideal child 'who actively contributes to their learning experience' (Cheeseman and Sumsion, 2016: 277). This may reveal heterotopia's counterpart—utopia. According to Foucault, all heterotopias and utopias relate to and reflect each other (Sudradjat, 2012: 29); furthermore, 'whereas utopias are unreal, fantastic and perfect spaces, heterotopias in Foucault's conception are real places that exist like counter sites' (Sudradjat, 2012: 29). The site of sleep, then, acts as a prism that allows exploration of the relations in kindergarteners' everyday lives. The kindergarten may be a fantastic and perfect place for playing, learning and being sociable, but this

article has explored a different space to uncover relations that extend far beyond human beings conducting social relations.

Conclusions

Informed by key concepts from Foucault, I have proposed ways in which the process of sleeping can be conceptualised in terms of the expropriation of sleep. The concept of heterotopia supports exploration of the spaces of sleep in early childhood settings and discovery of this ‘world within a world’, so disrupting constructions of sleep as an ‘outside zone’. I contend that sleep should be read as part of kindergarteners’ relational field—a field of speed and slowness of becoming, beyond the human subject. Following the pram and the sleeping child inside/outside the pram suggests how relational principles in early childhood settings can be reconceptualised.

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ⁱ <https://helsedirektoratet.no/folkehelse/psykisk-helse-og-rus/sovn-og-sovnevansker> (accessed 03 February 2017).